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ABSTRACT

The educational system of Turkey and educational evaluation efforts are described. In Turkey, the educational system includes optional preschool education, compulsory elementary education through age 14, secondary education for 3 or 4 years more (3 for university preparation, 4 for vocational education), and higher education. All of the preschool, elementary, and secondary programs are centrally prepared by the Ministry of Education (MOE), while higher education is cooperatively prepared by the Higher Educational Council and specialists at the universities. Reflective, formative, and summative evaluations are conducted. Most educational evaluation in Turkey, and especially most formative evaluation, is done by academic researchers, and findings of these evaluations are not used as much as they could be because of lack of cooperation with the MOE and educational systems. To solve the problem of evaluation utilization in Turkey, more cooperation between the MOE and academic researchers will be necessary. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN TURKEY

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EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN TURKEY

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Introduction

Turkey is a country on the Anatolian and Thrace peninsulas, which forms a geographical bridge between Europe and Western Asia. Aproximately 63 million people with 90 percent literacy rate, live in Turkey which is about the size of Texas. Turkey, in general, has a very young population with 36 percent under 14. There are about fourteen million students in schools at all levels from kindergarden through higher education.

Atatürk, Founder of the Turkish Republic in 1923, based his vision for Turkey on a western educational model. It was his conviction that Turkey must give up its Ottoman past and join the European community (McIsaac, 1992). The main purpose of this model is to help Turkish people to catch the level of contemporaray civilization. So, education in all schools is carried out according to the principles and innovations of Kemal Atatürk.

Education in Turkey is centrally directed, controlled and generally funded by the Ministry of Education. As is known, centralization and bureucratic paterns have produced formalization and lack of interconnectedness in the country (Bayram & Seels). Education is free at the public schools from kindergarden through higher education. All the necessary instructional materials and equipment for schools are met by the Government (Çilenti, 1989). In addition, students with insufficient financial opportunities are given scholarships by the Government.

Turkish educational system may be divided into four stages as seen in Figure 1.

1. Pre-schcool education which is optional, covers the education of children between 3-6 years of age. The number of students enrolled at this stage is about 500.000.

2. Elementary education covers the education of children between 6-14 years of age. This stage is compulsory for all citizens. The number of students enrolled at this stage is about 9 million.

3. Secondary education covers a three year or four year education after elementary education. The three year schools of this stage are general high schools which provide general education in order to prepare students for higher education. Four year schools are vocational and technical high schools which help students have a vocation in a technical field. The number of students enrolled at this stage is about 3 million.

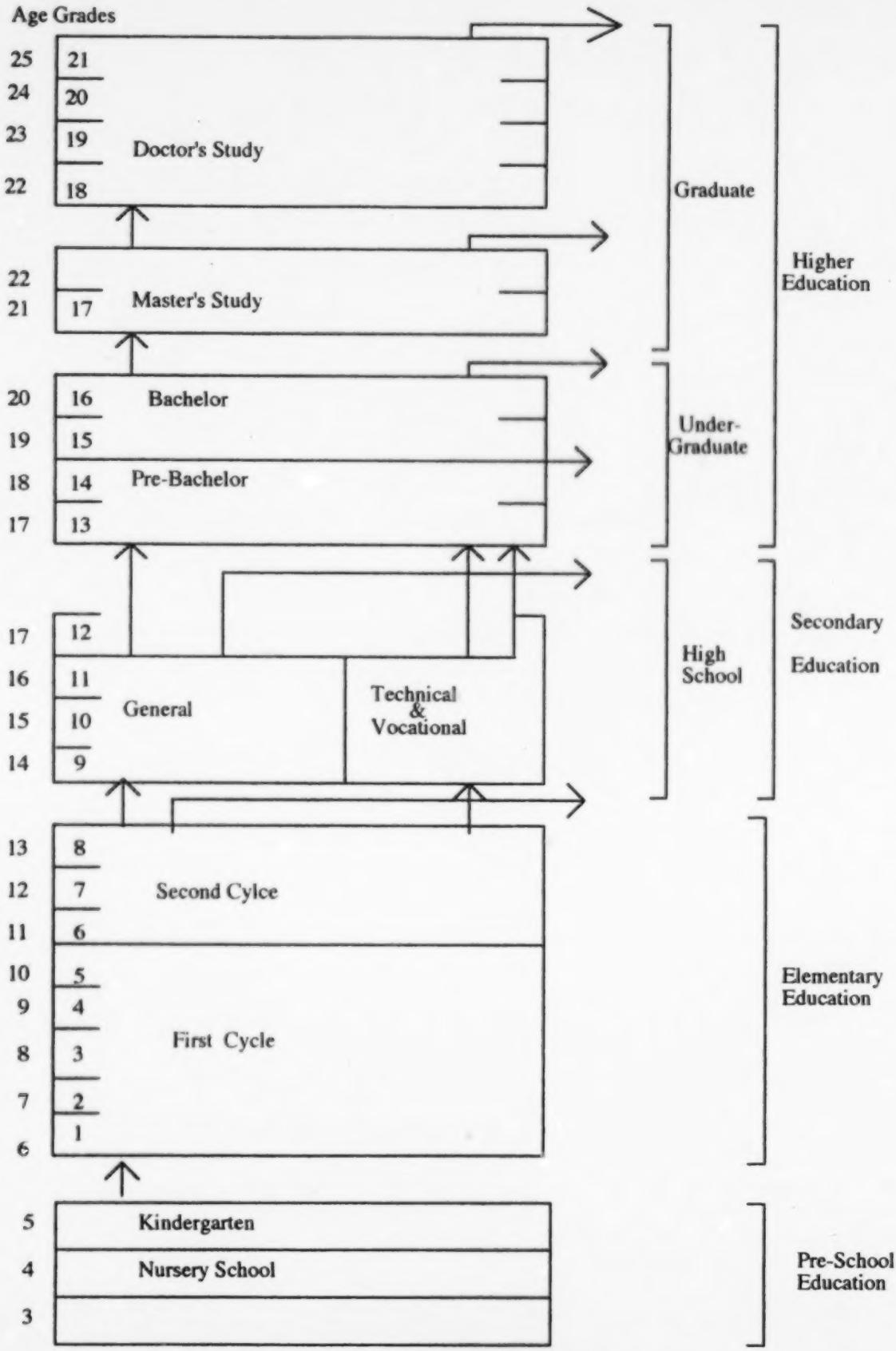

Figure 1. Structure of the Turkish Educational System

4. Higher education provides further and specialized education in various fields for high school graduates after taking the University Entrance Examinations. Most of the departments of the universities provide a 4 year education. The enrollment at this stage is about 1.500.000.

All the programmes of pre-school education, elementary education and secondary education in Turkey are centrally pepared by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Curriculum developers, educational technologists, specialists of the field, teachers, and the other experts participate in the process of preparing educational programmes. After the preparation of the educational programmes, they are put into practice as pilot application at several schools in different geographical reagions of the country. Then they are revised according to the feedbacks of the applications and they are spreaded throughout the country.

The educational programmes which are carried out at the universities are cooperatively prepared by the Higher Educadional Council (HEC) and subject specialists at the universities. Then the centrally prepared programmes are sent to the universities to be applied.

Evaluation of Educational Programmes in Turkey

The programmes which are prepared by both MOE or HEC are evaluated from time to time if necessary. These evaluation studies are done to provide feedback concerning whether the programmes work for their goals and insufficiencies or not. Besides, sometimes these studies are done to obtain solutions concerning how to overcome the insufficiencies.

Studies which are done to evaluate educational programmes in Turkey can be categorized as (1) Studies on reflective evaluation , (2) Studies on formative evaluation , and (3) Studies on summative evaluation.

Studies on reflective evaluation: As is known, reflective evaluation is done to get the opinions of the people who are concerned towards the draft of educational programmes before being put into practice (Turgut, 1983). The evaluation endeavours of MOE and HEC concerning the educational programmes are within the scope of reflective evaluation. Naturally, these studies are subjective because they are limited with the opinions of specialists and teachers.

Studies on formative evaluation: These studies are done to provide feedback concerning the current educational programmes in the practice. For instance, the studies which are done by MOE to improve in the programmes of elementary education and secondary education are within the scope of formative evaluation.

Besides the studies which are done by MOE, the specialists at the universities evaluate the educational programmes following the principles of formative evaluation. For instance, Fidan (1980) studied the effects of both students' characteristics and teaching methods on students' achievements in science.

On the other hand, Bilgin (1978) evaluated the religion programme of high schools to improve the related programme by surveying high school teachers. Kantemir evaluated the programme of Turkish Language and Literature by surveying high school teachers, too.

Yaşar & Selvi (1997) evaluated the science programmes of secondary education based on the opinions of teachers in high schools in terms of certain criteria.

In his study, Demirel (1979) utilized both teachers' opinions and achivement tests in order to evaluate the foreign language programmes in secondary education

In the higher education stage, in each one of the studies which were done by Aydın (1987), Bilen (1975), Peser (1974), and Ural (1980), the programme of only one course was evaluated by using pre-test and post-test designs.

Studies on summative evaluation: As is known, summative evaluation is the one that covers learning acquired both after the practice of teaching and the former learning. This type of evaluation is done to indicate the effects of the programme. Some of the studies mentioned above have characteristics concerning the summative evaluation. For instance, the studies which were done by Demirel (1979), Bilgin (1978), Kantemir (1974) and Yaşar & Selvi (1997) are good examples to summative evaluation.

The Characteristics of Evaluation Studies in Turkey

• Most of the evaluation studies in Turkey are done at the universities with the purpose of master, ph.D. or other academic rationale (Turgut, 1983).

• Reliability of the findings provided with the studies are limited because one or a few of components of the programme are studied in the evaluation process.

• The findings of the evaluation studies can not be utilized in practice as desired for several reasons. Some of them are as follows:

The studies on evaluation are generally limited studies which were done for only academic purposes.

The cooperation between MOE and universities is not as well as desired. Of course, this insufficent cooperation originates from the fact that MOE does not have enough specialists in terms of quantity and quality. On the other hand, changing of the cabinets and of the ministers consequently; each new minister's political desire of his own party give way to this insufficient cooperation between MOE and universities.

The studies which were done in Turkey is parallel to the ones in developed countries accelareted to the studies of curriculum development.

Programme evaluation studies in Turkey have also been affected by 96 percent inflation rate negatively. On the other hand, institutions do not have sufficient financial opportunuties for Research and Development. For instance, financial rate for Research and Development is under 1 percent of Turkey's budget while the rates for Research and Development are 10 percent in developed countries such as US.

Moreover, the National Education Develeopment Projects supported by the World Bank have also contributed to the curriculum development studies. Consequently, programme evaluation studies have gained more comprehensive and scientific qualifications.

Epilogue

Programme evaluation studies in Turkey are done by specialists at the universities besides those who work in the MOE. The studies which are done by the MOE are within the scope of reflective evaluation while those which are done at the universities by academicians are within the scope of formative evaluation. Today, programme evaluation studies in Turkey are carried out in parallel to the ones in developed countries. However, it is observed that the findings of programme evaluation studies cannot be put into practice as desired. In order to solve this problem, it seems necessary that the cooperation between MOE and universities should be developed.

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